##### [00:00:03.350] - Brian Shelton

I'm Brian Shelton, and you're listening to Harper Talks, a co-production of Harper College Alumni Relations and Harper Radio today on Harper Talks. I'm excited to speak with Michael Terson. Michael is a graduate of Harper College, a 2013 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient, and is the Superintendent of communications and marketing for the Buffalo Grove Park District. Michael also has a famous voice working as the public address announcer for the Chicago Wolves from 1999 to 2012 and for the Chicago Cubs from 2005 to 2008. But his career in communications started right here in the WHCM studio, where we are today for the first time for one of our Harper Talks podcasts.

##### [00:00:46.150] - Brian Shelton

Welcome to the studio, Michael. Thanks for being here.

##### [00:00:48.640] - Mike Terson

Thank you for having me. It's great to be fantastic.

##### [00:00:51.010] - Brian Shelton

You got a little bit of a cold today. So the coughing song was kind of ironic.

##### [00:00:56.070] - Mike Terson

Absolutely. Was I've never heard that song before.

##### [00:00:59.290] - Brian Shelton

Me neither. Welcome to College radio. So you graduated from Harper College in 1993. Is that correct?

##### [00:01:07.100] - Mike Terson

Yeah. I kind of took the scenic route through College in general. I graduated high school. I graduated from Buffalo Grove High School in 1988. Back then, I don't know how it is now, but back then, if you went to Harper, you were stigmatized by your peers. So that was the last thing on my plan. So I went to Western for a semester and hated Macomb. Just hated being out in Macomb, hated everything about Western. I chose the school because I had a buddy going there, which is a great.

##### [00:01:44.770] - Brian Shelton

Always a wonderful idea. Yes, it's.

##### [00:01:47.490] - Mike Terson

So I found myself back home after one semester and with not a lot of options and not a lot of plans. So I reluctantly signed up to go to school at Harper and quickly realized that all of the stigma that I had heard about going to the University of Southern Palatine or high school with Ashtrays, et cetera. Couldn't have been further from the truth. I really enjoyed my time here. It was a great experience. I joined the speech team. I joined the radio station. I really did well here.

##### [00:02:26.840] - Mike Terson

And I'll tell you the story in a little bit here. But WHCM is directly responsible for the trajectory of my career. I ended up quitting school and then coming back to finish at Harper back. Okay. Yeah.

##### [00:02:46.340] - Brian Shelton

I was going to ask you about your time at WHCM and with the speech team, but you mentioned the stigma of community College. I just like to talk about that for just a second. Why do you think that stigma existed then? Because I'll tell you, it still exists today, right there's still, "oh, you're going to go to community College". The reality is that at a place like Harper, and I don't just say this because I work here, but we have superior facilities. And I would argue superior faculty than a lot of the University programs.

##### [00:03:13.040] - Mike Terson

As someone who has I was inducted into the Distinguished Alumni back in 2013. So since then, I've had some time to really reconnect with Harper, volunteer with the 1 million Degrees program with the mentoring program. And I come back on campus quite regularly over the past decade. And, wow, it really is an impressive institution. And I think the irony is that when you look at it from 50,000ft, you have this area, this community College district, where the demographics are such that there's a lot of privilege. There's a lot of kids who go to high school in this district have a lot of opportunities.

##### [00:04:01.570] - Mike Terson

And when you juxtapose that to other areas of the country that don't have that same demographic, the irony is that this area has this community College that is probably one of the best in the country as far as the opportunities it creates for its constituents. And there's such a large percentage, who don't take advantage of it. And then you look at other areas of the country that could really thrive and use something like a Harper, and they don't have it. So it is odd. But what I think is fortunate is that it's a big district, and there are a lot of students who do need those resources as well.

##### [00:04:50.790] - Mike Terson

So obviously, Harper is serving a lot of people very well. It's producing some great contributors to society. It's helping people realize their potential and find success. And I would guess that there's probably a lot of students like I was even back in the late 80s, early 90s, who had no clue what they wanted to do. Or maybe I had a clue, but I didn't know how to go about doing it. And I really didn't have the intelligence (laughs) or discipline to follow a path or a plan.

##### [00:05:37.330] - Mike Terson

And Harper, it was just there for me when I needed it, and then I left, and then I needed it again, and it was there. So I think that it's easy to take for granted a resource like that. So, yeah, I don't know why the stigma thing. My guess is that you probably have that everywhere in the country with every community College. And that's unfortunate. But kudos to this institution for kind of like not letting that get in the way of progress.

##### [00:06:17.590] - Brian Shelton

I think it exists even at the University level, too. I grew up in Kentucky and Louisville, and the last thing I wanted to do was go to the University of Louisville at the time. And now the University of Louisville is a world class institution, and people come from all over the country to go to school there. And I was like, no, I'm not going to school there. I'm not going to do that. I think it's just where you are, right.

##### [00:06:37.330] - Mike Terson

Yes, it's that whole, whatever's in your backyard...

##### [00:06:38.730] - Brian Shelton

Is not good.

##### [00:06:39.800] - Mike Terson

Yes, you want to escape. I grew up in Buffalo Grove, and my whole adolescence was spent planning my escape from Buffalo Grove, and now I live there. I work there. My kid is a senior in high school at the same high school I went to, none of that panned out. And when it came time to raise a family and I had to start looking at things like schools and community and everything from park districts to grade schools and all those things, it was like, wow, wait a minute.

##### [00:07:13.730] - Brian Shelton

This is all right.

##### [00:07:14.630] - Mike Terson

This is kind of a great place. Like, what was my problem back then?

##### [00:07:19.170] - Brian Shelton

Yeah, I'm the same way. Every time I go home, I'm like, wow, this is really cool. Anyway, you were here in the late 80s and early 90s, and you are part of both WHCM and the speech team. We do still get crossover between those two groups. What was Harper like during that time period? Do you remember what? I don't know. How was the studio back then?

##### [00:07:42.530] - Mike Terson

A lot of similarities and a lot of differences. But I did Wednesday Mornings with Michael. I called my show back then, and it was only broadcast in building A.

##### [00:07:54.960] - Brian Shelton

Right. That was before we were in FM station, right?

##### [00:07:57.440] - Mike Terson

Yeah, right. So if you were one of those people who were hanging out in the cafeteria downstairs, you would hear WHCM whether you liked it or not.

##### [00:08:09.950] - Brian Shelton

Which is why we're not down down there now, by the way. But that's all that makes sense.

##### [00:08:14.700] - Mike Terson

My apologies for why that is. So I started having an interest in radio in high school. I was a drummer for the show choir at Buffalo Grove High School, and one of my peers, her father is Wayne Messmer. So I had the opportunity to meet Wayne Messmer when I was 16, and at the time, he was the news voice on Z 95 in the morning. And so it was a pretty high rated Chicago Morning show. And I think B 96 was probably the top rated in that demographic in Z 95 was right there.

##### [00:09:11.980] - Mike Terson

And so I had the opportunity he would chaperone our competitions and go on our weekend trips and to ask him advice. So when I got to Harper, I did radio speaking in high school on speech team. But when I got to College, there was no radio speaking as an event. So I had to find other categories to compete in which I did. Marsha Litrenta was..

##### [00:09:40.330] - Brian Shelton

The great Marsha Litrenta.

##### [00:09:42.400] - Mike Terson

Yes, she was fantastic. I really liked her. What was interesting, though? I had a lot of success in high school with radio speaking.

##### [00:09:50.970] - Mike Terson

When I got to College, I didn't win anything. It was a sad reality for me. It's just these other categories I just didn't thrive in. But I participated here at WHCM, and then something really odd happened that kind of set the path for me. So I was the news director here, right? There was like three people that had a key to the station. The station manager, I forgot his name. He went on to a four year school pretty quickly after I met him, the assistant station manager and the news director.

##### [00:10:35.910] - Mike Terson

Why I had a key to the station or needed one. I have no idea, but they gave me a key.

##### [00:10:40.120] - Brian Shelton

Because the news breaks fast...

##### [00:10:42.150] - Mike Terson

Apparently so. Well, at the time, I didn't have a car, so I had to take the bus from Buffalo Grove. I took a bus Arlington Heights Road down to downtown Arlington Heights. And then I had a transfer buses that went through Woodfield and through Schaumburg and eventually to Harper. What would have been a 10-15 minutes commute by car was about an hour and a half commute by bus.

##### [00:11:10.170] - Mike Terson

And the bus came here about every hour. So having a key to the radio station was great because I could just come in here and chill out and just have a place to it hang. So it was the last day of the semester, and I'm waiting for my bus, and I'm sitting in probably where I'm sitting right now talking to you, waiting to go downstairs to catch the bus. And it's about time to go catch the bus. So I get up and I start heading. I'm going to go downstairs and I lock up the station.

##### [00:11:47.910] - Mike Terson

Now I don't know what it's like here now, but back then, the phone never rang, and as I'm closing the door, the phone rings and I start to ignore it because it's not going to be for me. And I'm going to go downstairs and curiosity gets the best of me. I'm like, darn it. I'm going to answer the phone. So I put the key back in and I unlock the door and I go in and I answer the phone. WHCM and it's this guy. His name is Andy Pappas, and he is the head DJ at one of Walter Payton's bars place called the Acapulco Bar in Elk Grove.

##### [00:12:26.970] - Mike Terson

And Andy says, hey, I used to go to Harper. I used to participate in the radio station back then, and I'm 28 now. I'm a DJ, and I work at these nightclubs, and we're looking for an assistant DJ, like, a happy hour DJ to play some music, do some trivia games, give away some prizes part time gig. And I thought maybe it would be nice to give an opportunity to a student back where I started out. So I was hoping I could maybe you guys put up a flyer or something, get some people to come down and you're.

##### [00:13:00.820] - Brian Shelton

Like, put up a flyer. I'm coming.

##### [00:13:03.690] - Mike Terson

Well, and I said to him, I said, Well, I would absolutely do that. I said, but here's the thing. Today is, like the last day of the semester. Nobody's going to be here for, like, a month. He says, oh no, we need to hire someone, like, in the next week. I said, Well, I'll come down, I'm interested. So I did. And the rest is history. I ended up getting a job. Before we started this conversation. I was commenting on how you had turntables in the studio, and so I taught myself how to mix.

##### [00:13:38.490] - Mike Terson

I became a nightclub DJ. I quit school, which my parents loved, and for a good four years I was a full time nightclub DJ. I worked my way up through that through the ranks with Walter Payton's Bars. I ended up moving over to 34s down the street in Schaumburg and Pacific Club in Lombard and America's Bar downtown. And I did that for a good four years. And then I realized as I watched my colleagues, who also didn't finish school as they kind of matriculated into careers of bar management and other things that I knew I didn't want to do, I decided I got to get back in school. And then I came back and finished up.

##### [00:14:29.560] - Brian Shelton

So when you left Harper, though, you went to NIU, right.

##### [00:14:34.730] - Mike Terson

So when I came back to Harper and finished, then I went to NIU.

##### [00:14:40.890] - Brian Shelton

Okay. And has a National Public Radio station there. They do not have a student radio station, so no opportunity. Did you do any media while you were there?

##### [00:14:52.960] - Mike Terson

No, I majored in communications. I was still working full time at Payton's Bars.

##### [00:14:58.230] - Brian Shelton

Okay.

##### [00:14:59.550] - Mike Terson

So my week was chaotic. I had Mondays off from work, so I would do a lot of studying and homework. On Mondays and Tuesday through Friday, I would go to school during the day study where I could. I lived in the dorms, so I didn't have to cook and clean, and then I would get a quick meal and drive to Lombard and work at the Pacific Club. Come back about one in the morning, study a little bit, go to bed and do it all over again. And then on the weekends I would stay in Buffalo Grove.

##### [00:15:37.278] - Brian Shelton

Yeah.

##### [00:15:38.430] - Mike Terson

But I didn't do anything with broadcasting specifically while I was at NIU. And what's kind of ironic is after I graduated and I sent my radio demo tapes all over the country to try and get a radio job, the only job offer I got was WDEK in Dekalb. I ended up working for three years in radio at 92.5 WDEK.

##### [00:16:03.420] - Brian Shelton

Well, that's all right.

##### [00:16:05.610] - Mike Terson

I say it's the best $6 an hour I ever made.

##### [00:16:07.860] - Brian Shelton

Yeah, it's kind of similar, because when I was in school, I was running the College radio station full time. And then I'd go to school in the afternoon, and then I'd leave and I'd work the midnight to 06:00, a.m. Shift at a commercial radio station and then come back to school the next day. It was always a matter of going back and forth between school and two different radio stations. So it was pretty interesting. I went to NIU for graduate school, which is why I asked about the radio station there.

##### [00:16:34.480] - Brian Shelton

I'm always amazed that there's no place for students to do radio at NIU, but that's neither here nor there. So I do want to go back when you were here as a student with WHCM and with the speech team. Marsha Litrenta's name is well known around here. We have the Litrenta Triangle speech tournament every year in February. And so what was that like, being on the team back then? It was a pretty large group. Yeah?

##### [00:16:56.630] - Mike Terson

And I don't remember it a ton because it was so short lived for me. It was a time in my life where I was. I'm not going to say I was depressed, but it was kind of like in this purgatory, like my car broke down. I'm at Harper, where I didn't want to be. When I was a senior in high school, I was probably fighting with my parents. Things just weren't going my way. And then the speech team was something I was always really successful at in high school.

##### [00:17:29.530] - Mike Terson

And so I joined it in College, and I wasn't successful at it. And I didn't do it very long. I think that when I got that DJ job, it was just an opportunity for me to have a fresh start at things. And I wanted to just kind of clear the plate of everything having to do with school. And I did for four years. I did. But it gave me the opportunity to kind of, like, simmer down a little bit and look in the mirror and realize, okay, you walked away from all that before, but it's still steering you in the face, and you can't make it through life without a degree.

##### [00:18:15.870] - Mike Terson

You need to get through school. So it's time to start doing that. But when I was on the speech team and when I was doing that, I do remember her specifically being a very positive influence. She was one of the few very positive influences that I would pay attention to back then. And I remember being kind of discouraged that I wasn't having success with it. And her kind of saying, no, stick with it. You're doing good. These are new events for you that you've never done before.

##### [00:18:48.290] - Mike Terson

You're getting better at it, right. So I imagine if I would have stayed in school, things would have gotten better for me in that regard. But I took that other path at the time.

##### [00:19:01.320] - Brian Shelton

Well, another path worked out. Okay. Tell me about being the public announcer for the Wolves and for the Cubs. What the heck was that like? How did that work?

##### [00:19:09.160] - Mike Terson

So that's interesting. Kind of like, similar to the sitting here in this room. When the phone rang, I was DJing at Pacific Club, and there was this new roller hockey team in town.

##### [00:19:24.990] - Brian Shelton

Roller hockey...

##### [00:19:26.460] - Mike Terson

The Chicago Cheetahs. They existed. I think for two or three seasons.

##### [00:19:30.230] - Brian Shelton

 We could use a roller hockey team. I think that'd be fun. Maybe we should have that at the College. That would be great.

##### [00:19:35.190] - Mike Terson

It is a cool sport. And in fact, one of the players who played for the Cheetahs ended up in the NHL. Harry York was his name. But anyway, so the Cheetahs were looking for cheerleaders. So they did this promotion at Pacific Club, where they set up a table and they were looking for cute girls who were interested in being kind of like the Lovabulls, but on a much smaller scale.

##### [00:20:01.230] - Brian Shelton

Sure.

##### [00:20:01.230] - Mike Terson

And they kept coming up to the DJ booth and asking if I would make announcements for them all night. I'm a 21, 22 year old sure guy. What am I going to do? So of course, I'll make as many announcements as you want. So I plugged them all night. And, hey, if you're interested, stop by their table at the end of the night. The woman who was kind of in charge of the cheerleader thing said, hey, you got a really nice voice. I know the team is looking for a PA announcer. I don't know if it's something you'd be interested in. I said, Well, at the time I was going to Northern, I said, Well, I'm going to Niu, and I'm studying communications, and I never gave that much thought but couldn't hurt.

##### [00:20:49.120] - Mike Terson

Sure, I'd be interested in looking into that. So I have no knowledge of hockey at the time the first game, I can't believe they even had me back. I butchered it so bad I called penalties that didn't even exist in hockey. And one of the office officials was kind enough to pull me aside and kind of give me Hockey 101 after that made it through the season. I think the Cheatahs folded after that, but I sent Wayne Messmer a note. Hey, Mr. Messmer, I don't know if you remember me. Mike from Buffalo High School. I was the drummer for Expressions with your daughter, and I just wanted to let you know I did this roller hockey gig as the announcer. And at the time, the Wolves were just kind of coming into existence, and I knew he had something to do with the ownership and the forming of that organization. I said, if the Wolves are ever looking for an announcer, I would definitely be interested. And he sent me what I call the nicest rejection letter I've ever gotten.

##### [00:21:56.106] - Brian Shelton

(laughs)

##### [00:21:57.150] - Mike Terson

Great to hear from you. I'm glad things are going well and all that. He said, no, we're not looking for anyone right now, but keep in touch. So I did. I was a huge Cubs fan, and I would go to a ton of Cub games. Back when I was working at Payton's clubs, we used to give away Cubs tickets, prizes. And there was a lot of day games back then, so we have the luxury of being able to go to a lot of baseball games. And whenever Wayne Messmer was seeing the anthem at a game I was at, I would make a point to go down and say Hello to him and just quick Hello and go back to my seat.

##### [00:22:37.190] - Mike Terson

And he always seemed genuinely happy to see me. And how are things? So one day I met Wrigley field with my brother and it's raining and we're covered. We're sitting in the grandstand and my brother says, hey, don't you always go say Hi to Wayne Messmer whenever you come to the game? I said, yeah, but it's raining and I don't want to walk all the way down there and get wet. And then I hesitated, kind of like the key in the lock story where I was going to walk away and I came back. I changed my mind and I said, all right, I'm going to go say Hi. So I go down there to say Hi to him. And I said, hey, Mr. Messmer, I just wanted to say, Hi. It's raining. I don't want to keep you. And he said, oh, he says, Mike, I need to talk to you about something. Can you wait a second? I said, sure. So he goes. And he sings the anthem. And the whole time I'm standing in the rain wondering, what the heck could Wayne Messmer want to talk to me about?

##### [00:23:32.350] - Mike Terson

He gets them singing and we go down in the tunnel. And he says, The Wolves are looking for an announcer. You did that roller hockey thing, right? I said, yeah, he says, you know, hockey pretty well. I said, I do now.

##### [00:23:45.910] - Brian Shelton

Yes, sir.

##### [00:23:47.130] - Mike Terson

And so long story short, I end up becoming the Wolves announcer. And a few years after that, because he was the Cubs PA announcer for many years and, I don't know if you knew this, but he got shot in a robbery.

##### [00:24:06.940] - Brian Shelton

Oh, my goodness.

##### [00:24:07.480] - Mike Terson

Now, after a Blackhawks game, I want to say 1991 or 1992. I can't remember what year, but he fully recovered, obviously. But after he had gotten shot, that's when the Cubs brought in Paul Friedman to do the PA announcing. And then when Wayne came back, they split the games. Wayne did the day games. Paul did the night and weekend games. And then there had to be so many night games that Paul didn't want to do the weekends anymore. And so Wayne said to the head of marketing at the time, which was John McDonough, who later became the Cubs President.

##### [00:24:54.760] - Brian Shelton

Sure.

##### [00:24:55.050] - Mike Terson

and Black Hawks President. Wayne said, hey, why don't you take a look at my guy, Mike at the Wolves. We could bring him in to do the weekends. And that's how that all happened. Amazing.

##### [00:25:05.400] - Brian Shelton

That must have been a great time.

##### [00:25:08.630] - Mike Terson

I did it for four seasons. It's a big stage, right? It's a really big stage. And it was a great experience. It was such a big stage and there was so much pressure that I don't know that I ever really enjoyed it to the fullest while I was doing it.

##### [00:25:31.760] - Brian Shelton

Sure. Yeah.

##### [00:25:34.850] - Mike Terson

But it's one of those things not many people get to say they were the voice of Wrigley Field. Yeah.

##### [00:25:39.560] - Brian Shelton

I was fine with stuff like that. It's afterwards that you realize how great it was. It's not while you're doing it while you're doing. You're so terrified, right?

##### [00:25:45.980] - Mike Terson

Totally. Totally. My first game. You can imagine. I was so nervous, and I thought it went really well. And I get a call from a buddy of mine who says, hey, check out this website. And it was this fan website with this blog, this message board. And they were talking about, oh, there's a new announcer at Wrigley Field and just railing on me like, this guy's terrible. And he should stick to hockey. And I was like, all right, well, welcome to the big time.

##### [00:26:17.040] - Brian Shelton

Isn't the Internet great.

##### [00:26:19.010] - Mike Terson

It was so great. And then a few years later, the guy wanted to interview me for his website, and I said, Jeez, I read the things you wrote about me. I don't know if I want to do an interview with you. He said, oh, no. I've softened my position on you.

##### [00:26:33.650] - Brian Shelton

You've gotten better!

##### [00:26:33.650] - Mike Terson

I think you do a good job now. Okay? Yeah. People are great.

##### [00:26:38.070] - Brian Shelton

That's great. So how does all this media experience and everything that you've done translate into what you do as the Superintendent of communications and marketing for the partnership? What is that job? What do you do? There might be some students out there thinking, maybe I want to do that.

##### [00:26:51.590] - Mike Terson

Well, kind of like the DJ and a nightclub and kind of like the Stadium announcer. This is something I kind of stumbled into. Also, I found myself in my early 30s with this degree in communications, not working in broadcasting anymore. I was selling advertising for Auto Trader. And back then, Auto Trader had public, you go into White Hen and buy an Auto Trader. The Internet was still a new thing, and I hated it. It was just a horrible culture this company to work for at the time. They would cut commissions and raise quotas, and my sales went up and my checks were going down. And my son, who's a senior in high school now was a newborn at the time. And I was really frustrated. And my brother, who works, he has a business where he teaches swimming lessons. So he's kind of in the recreation industry. He pointed me in the right direction. He told me about a website I should keep an eye on that had Park District jobs. And he said a lot of times they have marketing jobs. And he knew I was working for a publication. It was kind of a similar genre, if you will.

##### [00:28:21.050] - Mike Terson

And I had worked part time at the Buffalo Grove Park District as a kid in high school. I was camp counselor, and I set up softball fields and did some grunt work. And Lo and behold, they were hiring and some of my old bosses were still there. So I sent a cover letter and a resume. I don't know if anybody remembers me there, but I think I'd be great at this job that you're posting for. And long story short there. I end up talking my way into getting that job.

##### [00:28:50.880] - Brian Shelton

That's great.

##### [00:28:52.010] - Mike Terson

And in fact, Wayne Mesmer was one of my references. And after I got hired, my boss told me I was kind of hemming and hawing between you and one other person. I was leaning towards the other person. And Wayne Mesmer talked me into hiring you. And so I've always, you know,

##### [00:29:10.480] - Brian Shelton

That's, right? You got to build bridges, right? You got to have people who will talk nice about you, right? It's a very important lesson.

##### [00:29:17.270] - Mike Terson

I'm still 17 years later, I'm still there, and I still give Wayne all the credit for the influence he's had on my career. But what I love about this job, I kind of compare it to if you were a morning show, a radio morning show where it's never the same day, twice. Some days I'm a photographer. I go out to events and I take pictures for publications and websites. Some days I'm a writer. I write press releases or I write copy for programs that are going to be in the Park District catalog.

##### [00:29:53.790] - Mike Terson

Some days I'm a videographer or a journalist. I'm interviewing people. I run a Department. I have people who report to me, so I have to manage people. It really is this exciting, always changing. It's a very community oriented role. I'm the face and voice a lot of times for the district at events, I emcee events. I oversee the corporate sponsorship arm of the Park District. So it has that sales component, too. It's just a very enjoyable atmosphere. It's a great culture kind of compared to when I was doing the job, I had to get myself out of where I hated the culture.

##### [00:30:41.630] - Mike Terson

It just ended up being the perfect fit for me. And the job has changed a lot. Over the years. There was no social media. When I took the job, print was everything. There was no digital, and now it's flipped. Digital is everything, and print is kind of the red headed stepchild in the room.

##### [00:31:00.010] - Brian Shelton

Right, right.

##### [00:31:01.590] - Mike Terson

So I've had to continue with lifelong learning myself and adapt and grow. But it is a career that I think much like people are driven to different careers for different reasons. With nursing students, Harper has a lot of nursing students. It is a great nursing program, and I imagine that if you sat down and talked to all the students who get into nursing, they'll tell you, oh, they want to help people. They have the thing that makes them tick is they want to help people be healthy and all those things. And for me, I'm a community person. I love to see people in my community be happy and healthy and thrive and socialize. So this job is a way for me to do that, to be at the center of so many things happening in the community and to be the one that kind of organizes how that information is pushed out and sent out to the masses.

##### [00:32:14.350] - Brian Shelton

That's fantastic. That's one of the things about communication degrees and people who have good communication skills is that you can always learn to adapt and move that into another part of your job or of your career. And you just keep moving along. And we have to keep learning new skills and new techniques transitioning from print to digital. You know what a big transition that was for everybody.

##### [00:32:36.590] - Mike Terson

When I was going to Northern, I was learning how to edit with a razor blade and a reel to reel.

##### [00:32:44.010] - Brian Shelton

Same.

##### [00:32:44.010] - Mike Terson

And then I get to WDEK and everything was starting to go digital. And so I had to learn how to edit on the computer. But I was so myopic on a career that involved this. And I'm pointing the microphone. I know we're not on video, but everything I thought I was going to do is going to be centered around a microphone in some way. And to your point, yes, there's so many other forks in the road and avenues to go with those communication skills that I never thought of myself as a writer. I was always a think on the fly talk kind of person. And once I started writing, I realized, Whoa, I got something here, and I enjoyed it a lot. Yeah.

##### [00:33:37.820] - Brian Shelton

We have a guy here who has been a DJ for us for a long time. He's a student and really good with all the tech skills. And I'm like, Erik, you're a great DJ and everything. But if you thought about going in the broadcast engineering route, and so he took a couple of networking classes, we hooked him up with an internship with a broadcast engineer. And now he's a full time broadcast engineer, right. He's got a whole career that is always going to grow and always be needed. You just got to find a way like you can still be, still be involved in the radio side because the glamour side is behind the microphone. Everybody wants to be behind the microphone.

##### [00:34:09.730] - Mike Terson

Absolutely.

##### [00:34:10.490] - Brian Shelton

All the other jobs is where the jobs are. Right. And that's something. As a media educator, always telling students the behind the mic or the in front of the camera jobs are such a small percentage. It's all the other stuff that goes on behind the scenes is where most of the jobs are. Yeah.

##### [00:34:27.920] - Mike Terson

Sometimes I wonder what I'd be doing had I not answered that phone right. If I would have stayed in school, gone through in four years, four or five years, got a degree in communications, gone around the country and worked at different stations. I do wonder if I would have gotten into television if I would have stuck with broadcasting, who knows? But it all worked out. And I have been saying for years that if it wasn't for Harper College, it wasn't for me being here at Harper College at that moment, I don't know where the trajectory my life would have gone. I mean, it had a huge, huge impact on where I ended up.

##### [00:35:18.750] - Brian Shelton

Little choices is what I always tell people, the little choices that you make. Make a tremendous...

##### [00:35:22.000] - Mike Terson

Absolutely.

##### [00:35:23.170] - Brian Shelton

So, speaking of Harper, you became a Harper Distinguished alumni in 2016. What was that like for you? It was 2013. I'm sorry.

##### [00:35:32.110] - Mike Terson

No, that's all right. That was a shock. I was never a great student. I wasn't a horrible student, but my mind was always kind of in other places and wasn't really focused. I was probably an undiagnosed ADD student and who probably would have benefited from some medication back then. But I never did that well in school. And so when that happened, I remember when I got up and gave my speech, the first thing I said was, well, you people clearly didn't look at my transcript for the criteria for this. And I was so honored and humbled to be recognized like that. I never dreamed that an institution of higher learning would even look back on my existence as part of anything they were doing. So, yeah, it was really great. And it gave me the opportunity to reconnect with Harper, which I have done since then. I volunteered for many years with the 1 million degrees program here on campus. And I'm currently volunteering with Harper's mentoring program. So that's just been great. And, yeah, that was a really cool experience for me.

##### [00:37:13.970] - Brian Shelton

 What an honor. Yeah.

##### [00:37:15.650] - Mike Terson

Just such a huge honor that I never expected that would ever happen. And when I look at everything I've done in my life, some of it's cool. The Stadium announcing is cool. But I guess when I look at other distinguished alum, I'm so impressed by what they've accomplished. I kind of like, look, I kind of look around the room and think, do they realize that I'm in the room? Like, how did I get the keys to this castle? Like, who let me in this room? So it's very humbling and a huge honor and everything I've been able to do Harper had a big play in my success.

##### [00:38:00.800] - Brian Shelton

Well, I get to interview a lot of the distinguished alumni on the show. It's not all distinguished alumni. It's alumni, people who have won the distinguished alumni award. And they all have something in common. And that is that something at Harper hit them over the head where it was the thing that made them who they are. And that is the common thread with all those people. And it doesn't matter what they are. Doctor, nurse, engineer, director of marketing. It's all something at Harper, whacked them. And they have a real affinity for this place because of that. They know they went on and they got their degree from someplace else and have done great things at other places. But they come back to Harper because they know that's where the light bulb clicked on. Right?

##### [00:38:44.650] - Mike Terson

Yeah.

##### [00:38:45.870] - Brian Shelton

That's a lot of fun to talk to people about that.

##### [00:38:48.000] - Mike Terson

That is cool.

##### [00:38:49.410] - Brian Shelton

So we talked about this a little bit through different parts of this conversation, but I always ask each one of the guests on the show. What advice do you have for current Harper students?

##### [00:38:59.610] - Mike Terson

That's a good question.

##### [00:39:00.960] - Brian Shelton

Thank you.

##### [00:39:03.510] - Mike Terson

My advice is I think current Harper students is a wide range of people. It's that 18-19 year old who doesn't know what they want to do. And it's also that 40 something who might be going through a divorce or a life change where they need to find a career to a senior citizen who never finished school. And now is the time that they just want to do it. There's so many different students. So my advice that I think goes across the board is, don't go for the job that you think you're qualified for. Go for the job that you want to be qualified for. Don't sell yourself short. Don't put limitations on your own potential. If there's something out there that you think you want, go get it. Go convince someone that you're the one for that role, because the more I look at the world and careers in the world and jobs and the conversations I have with other people who hire people is that these jobs, these tasks anybody can do. There's certain jobs where, yes, you have to have a medical license to do surgery on people. You have to have a teaching certificate to teach kindergarten. But a lot of jobs out there don't require licensing. They require experience, or they require an aptitude for that skill, training in that area. But at the end of the day, we can teach people to do any task. But we can't teach people to be the person that they are.

##### [00:41:00.000] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:41:00.640] - Mike Terson

Nobody can teach you work ethic. Nobody can teach you mental toughness. And at the end of the day, nobody can teach you to be the person you are. And so that's what separates everybody. Every student, every job applicant. Yes, every job posting has certain requirements, certain educational requirements, certain experience, whatever. But I would encourage people to ignore that. Put yourself out there and go, if you think there's something that is the perfect fit for you that you might not be qualified for yet, throw your hat in the ring and convince someone why you're the right choice.

##### [00:41:47.370] - Brian Shelton

Fantastic advice. Hey, you want to come back and DJ with us?

##### [00:41:51.150] - Mike Terson

It's been a while since I've DJ'd, but that might be fun. I don't know that my playlist would go over.

##### [00:41:58.880] - Brian Shelton

Well, you never know. As long as it's clean. It's got to be FCC clean.

##### [00:42:03.950] - Mike Terson

No, it's clean, but it would be what you would refer to as old school. I think we have a lot of that.

##### [00:42:10.330] - Brian Shelton

We have such a wide variety of content.

##### [00:42:13.040] - Mike Terson

Well, I play drums in a rock band. The band is called Industrial Drive. Our website is Industrialdrive.net.

##### [00:42:21.970] - Brian Shelton

Plug!

##### [00:42:23.190] - Mike Terson

Absolutely. And we're a cover band. We play bars and festivals and stuff. And when people say, what kind of music do you play, I say we play the most eclectic variety of rock. You've ever heard. And it kind of reminds me of when I was playing music here at WHCM, like we play Duran Duran and a lot of Brian Adams and some of the 80 stuff, but we also play the Cult and Nine Inch Nails and Foo Fighters and Pearl Jam.

##### [00:42:54.050] - Brian Shelton

You fit in just fine here.

##### [00:42:55.800] - Mike Terson

We're all across the board. So it reminds me of when you were in a College radio station, played all this music. That was just all these different genres.

##### [00:43:03.030] - Brian Shelton

It's fun. We have a lot of fun.

##### [00:43:04.870] - Mike Terson

I bet.

##### [00:43:05.750] - Brian Shelton

Thanks so much for being here today, Mike. I appreciate it.

##### [00:43:08.140] - Mike Terson

Hey, Brian, my pleasure. Thanks for having me. It was great to come back and see the place, and it's very nostalgic to be back where it all starts.

##### [00:43:17.080] - Brian Shelton

It's always fun. Thanks again. I appreciate it. Michael Terson is a graduate of Harper College and a 2013 Distinguished Alumni. If you're enjoying Harper Talks, please subscribe and while you're at it rate and review us so that others might find us. Harper Talks is a co production of Harper College Alumni Relations and Harper Radio. Our show is produced by Shannon Hynes. Our technical producer is Erik Bonilla-Sanchez, who is hanging out in Detroit right now instead of being here. This episode was edited by Brian Diaz. Our online content producer is Ashley Rosenthal. Our theme music was created by Aidan Cashman. I'm Brian Shelton. Thanks for listening.